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Public Affairs Office**

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## **Deployment a life-changing experience for one new NCO**

By Staff Sgt. Keith M. Anderson  
16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq — Sgt. Ashley Dawn Gochnour, military police non-commissioned officer, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, said this deployment has changed her.

“This deployment has been a life changing experience,” said Gochnour, a 23-year-old native of McEwen, Tenn., on her first deployment to Iraq. “There is nothing to me more satisfying than putting on my uniform each and every day to serve my country from overseas. This is my first deployment and this experience has taught me true meaning to being a Soldier and non commissioned officer.”

Gochnour said that she has learned what it truly means to be a non-commissioned officer.

“I will remember earning the respect and confidence of my Soldiers by ensuring their welfare and striving to always accomplish the mission,” Gochnour said. “It gives me a sense of pride and accomplishment to lead Soldiers. Leading by example and leading from the front is what it means to me to be an NCO.”

The deployment taught her a lot, but she has also learned from her NCOs, Gochnour said.

“Every NCO I have served with over the past five years has had an impact on my career, both positive and negative,” said Gochmour. “NCO’s ranging from my peers to senior leadership have molded me into one of the Army’s future leaders. Their guidance has instilled the Army Values into the core of who I am, and in turn I have passed those values on to my Soldiers.”

Gochmour said she was able to help one of her Soldiers.

“A Soldier in my squad excelled above and beyond most of his peers except for in health and fitness,” Gochmour said. “The Soldier lacked motivation and confidence to lose weight and pass the APFT (Army physical fitness test). Under my guidance, his motivation and confidence has reached its peak. He was able to pass his APFT and cut his body-fat percentage in half over a three-week time period.”

Gochmour said there are many reasons to join the Army, but service is the most important.

“Enlist for a purpose, such as the simple pride in serving your country,” said Gochmour. “Remember that purpose and let it drive you toward success in the military.”

Gochmour, who enjoys spending her free time with her husband Erik Gochmour outdoors or going horseback riding, said she plans to finish her bachelor’s degree in business management while she is in the military, and to continue to grow as a leader.



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